

i guess i could start a war, i guess i could sleep on it by meliebee

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Again, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Finally, Gen, Hurt Steve, I try to write Nancy and fail terribly, Nancy Wheeler-Centric, Nancy wheeler ur doing amazing sweetie, Post-Season/Series 02, Sibling Bonding, Steve Harrington Needs a Hug, THE WHEELER SIBLINGS TALK, appreciate these kids! they're doing great!, appreciate these teens! they're trying so hard!, basically this is just. a mess., haven't edited this! pls be gentle!, i'm sorry son, listen this is crap BUT I need to post it so it doesn't just collect dust on my desktop, the whole gangs here lads, they're all okay!! they're all gonna be a-okay!!!

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Everyone & Everyone, Jonathan Byers & Steve Harrington & Nancy Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Mike Wheeler & Nancy Wheeler

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Summary:

And somehow this is the first time she thinks of all that, with Jonathan's head buried in her sweaty shirt, Joyce's shaky form standing in front of her, and Will's convulsing body still screaming horrifically on the bed. Mike, she thinks, only briefly, with a sudden stab of panic, and Will screams louder.

(And later, when she's seen the black smoke escape Will into the night sky, she thinks, Nancy, don't be silly, he's not going anywhere,

and he has Steve.)

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Author's Note:

somehow all of nancy's characterisation came out not at all right :// oh well,, what can i say,, i tried kids and i failed,,, pls vaiddate me

It's only when Jonathan's arms are wrapping around her and she can feel him shaking against her while Will shrieks that Nancy feels unexpected worry creeping in for her own little brother. She's always known he had a knack for getting into trouble, and last year only proved that, but Mike has been different, this past year, which even she could tell. She was never very close with him. Their family isn't... bad, exactly, or even as absent as Steve's, but. Well. Nancy has been dreaming of making her own life since forever, and somewhere along the way, Mike got in the way. Nancy wanted to be perfect, the golden girl, while Mike couldn't even be bothered to pretend to be normal, and you'd think that after surviving a trauma together they'd get closer, but they didn't. Nancy went back to Steve, and Mike went back to his friends, and that was that. Apart from that one conversation, *no more secrets*, they didn't even talk about what had happened.

Nancy had tried, once, had asked about Eleven, and Mike had been short-tempered and dismissive until Nancy, frustrated, let it drop. That should have been a warning sign that things weren't going to go back to normal. Mike could be bit annoying, or a lot annoying, actually, but he was Nancy's brother and of course she would think that, it was her job. Really Mike was a sweet kid, with a kind smile and a good heart, and then he just wasn't. Or rather, he was different. He was different, Nancy had her own things to deal with, she started eating dinner with Barb's parents which unleashed a wave of emotions she'd been trying to block out; so when Mike started getting in trouble at school, she barely even noticed. And the thing was that their parents hadn't either. They berated him and chastened him and complained about how early he was entering his teenage phase, but they didn't try to talk to him or get him to open up, and even if they had, Mike couldn't say anything, could he? Nancy suspected he knew

more about what had happened last October than anyone else.

And somehow this is the first time she thinks of all that, with Jonathan's head buried in her sweaty neck, Joyce's shaky form standing in front of her, and Will's convulsing body still screaming horrifically on the bed. *Mike*, she thinks, only briefly, with a sudden stab of panic, and Will screams louder.

(And later, when she's seen the black smoke escape Will and into the night sky, she thinks, *Nancy, don't be silly, he's not going anywhere, and he has Steve.*)

They bundle Will up in a thin blanket, his tiny body still shaking, and Jonathan keeps one arm holding Will to his chest and the other reaching out to Nancy and gripping her hand, with a hollow look in his eyes that scares her. Joyce is driving the car, glancing back every few seconds to check that they're all okay, her bedraggled hair sticking to her sweaty face, and Nancy thinks that Joyce is a damn near perfect mother. Nancy loves her mother, she really does, but Joyce... Joyce is something else. The car is silent, and the windows are down, and Nancy leans her head against the back of her seat and exhales long and deep.

"We're okay," whispers Jonathan, holding her gaze, a weak smile twitching at his lips, in an attempt at reassurance.

Nancy can't find the strength to reply so she settles for smiling back at him, turning her face away to watch the landscape fly past.

We're okay, she repeats silently, and some of the tension in her neck and shoulders seeps away.

Mike is the one who greets them at the Byers house. They pull up to the house, Joyce clicking the lights off and pulling her keys out with a relieved sigh, and Jonathan and Nancy exchange glances. She'd assumed they'd all run out of the house at the first sound of a car engine, and he clearly did too.

Joyce waits for another minute in the car, exhaling shakily, and then

she opens the car door and waits by Jonathan's to help him with Will. Nancy exits the car too, standing by the Byers' nervously, and squints suspiciously at the house. She can see one of the blinds moving by the windows, and nudges Jonathan, who glances over, just as the door rattles, and then bursts open. Mike comes running out, his eyes on the figure cradled in Jonathan's arms.

“Is he okay?” Jonathan sends Mike a small smile, nodding, and Mike’s shoulders slump in relief only fractionally.

“Thank God,” he says empathetically, and Nancy narrows her eyes at him, stepping closer.

“Why are you so dirty?” Mike spares her only a quick glance, shrugging his shoulders, and Nancy frowns. He really is a mess, his clothes dirty and his pants scraped up, dark smudges on his face, dust in his hair.

“Not important right now,” Mike dismisses, and Nancy wants to protest but Mike bounces on his feet with a frantic energy he never used to possess, leaning back to call into the house.

“We’re safe,” he calls out, “They got it out of Will!”

Two tiny heads poke out, Lucas and the girl Nancy has yet to meet, and Lucas’s face breaks into a smile. “Will! Mrs Byers! Jonathan! Nancy!”

“Hey,” Jonathan greets, shifting Will in his arms, Mrs Byers’ smile fond when she looks at Mike, even harried as she is.

“Hey,” Nancy echoes, frowning at the way Lucas hangs back, something in the boy’s face striking her as almost jittery.

Mike’s hands twitch like he wants to offer to carry Will in himself, but he refrains, jerking his head towards the house instead. Jonathan heads over to the door with Mike by his side, Mike’s hands hovering by his side helplessly as he stares at Will’s face in concern. “Is he okay?”

Joyce tries for a smile, which comes off as strained and exhausted but there nonetheless. “He’s gonna be fine, honey,” she tells Mike, who

looks at her, openly sceptical. Nancy tries to remember when Mike started doubting adults like this. “He’s just going to be very tired for a while.” Her hands flutter over to Will’s face, smoothing some of his sweaty hair away from his face, and then turning back to Mike.

“Are you guys okay?” Mike doesn’t even look at her, still staring at Will’s face with a million different emotions.

“We’re fine,” Mike says absently, his hands in constant motion. He looks at Lucas, who doesn’t even try for a smile. “We’re—fine.”

When he brushes past them to push into the house, Nancy notices the way he presses his arm against Lucas’, like a physical reminder that he’s there, the way he lets his fingers trail against the girl’s arm as he passes by her. It happens in only a second, but it feels important. Somewhere along the way, Mike went from being the paladin of their dungeons and dragons group to an actual, serious leader, and Nancy doesn’t know how she missed it.

She doesn’t have time to ponder it, nor the way that Lucas is stepping a bit further back from Jonathan than is necessary, because they’re entering the house and was it always this chaotic? The papers around the house are still clinging determinedly to the walls and floors, and there are red spots scattered throughout the floor—blood. Some of it comes from the soles of shoes, from when they brought back Joyce screaming in Hopper’s arms and Mike holding onto her hand like he was keeping her afloat. Some of the blood, though—it’s fresh. Nancy frowns.

“Mike?” He turns to look at her over his shoulder, helping the girl make room for Will on the couch. “Is this blood?”

The girl stares at Mike, and then at Nancy, and then back at Mike. Her face looks fearful. “Oh,” says Mike. “Uh.” The girl’s eyes are alarmingly wide, and Nancy frowns harder. “Yeah, uh, that’s probably some blood, yeah. Not—not much, though.”

Nancy stares at him, and at the girl who’s trying to stand as still as possible and closes her eyes. She knows she should ask. She *knows* she should. They’re not even trying to be convincing, God. “Okay,” she says instead, because *God* she’s tired. She is so, so tired of this. Of

all of this, of the fact that Mike's shoes have blood on the bottom of them, and the way that there's a random girl in this house who Mike trusts more than his own sister, even though Nancy has *literally never seen her before*. The girl's jaw has dropped, but Mike has already turned away.

In the morning, Nancy promises herself, this stops. In the morning once this is over, she will stop giving Mike reasons to turn away from her, and she will stop abandoning her little brother just as everybody around him is. But it isn't the morning, and Jonathan is leaning down to lower Will onto the couch. Joyce slips onto the ground beside the couch, grabbing for his hand, and Jonathan, now relieved of the burden that kept him upright, stumbles.

"Hey, okay," says Nancy, because *she knows how to do this*. Jonathan is a lot easier to deal with than Mike. Maybe because she actually tries. "Okay, let's sit down."

"Okay," Jonathan whispers, hands shaking, and Nancy's already trembling heart caves in on itself a bit further. God, she's so tired.

Nancy reaches out, taking his fingers in her own, and together they stumble away from the living room and into the dining room. Nancy blinks.

"Steve?"

Steve, resting with his head on the table, doesn't even move. Dustin, who's sitting beside him with tear-stained cheeks, elbows him roughly, and Steve jerks up with a muffled hiss and curse. "What, dispshit—"

"Nancy," Dustin hisses back, and Steve swings his head lethargically over to the doorway, where Nancy's still standing, horrified. Steve is a *mess*.

"Oh my god," Nancy mumbles. Louder: "Oh my god."

Jonathan's jaw has dropped. "What the *hell*—how the *hell*—" Nancy stares. "I thought—you were protecting them, how—"

"Hey!" Dustin is glaring. "Do not even *try* that," he snarls, sounding

actually, genuinely angry. “Steve *did* protect us, obviously. What, d’you think *we* beat his face to hell and back, *god*—”

“Woah,” mumbles Steve, patting Dustin’s shoulder clumsily. “Chill, kid. Don’t think she meant it like that.” Dustin, calming, still glares, and Nancy fights hard not to show her wince.

“I just meant, uh.” Nancy blinks, pressing her eyes shut hard. Her thoughts are becoming more and more difficult to sort through, murkier. “Why are you beat up, again?”

Steve shrugs, one shoulder raising higher than the other, and Nancy absently feels herself moving across the floor and helping Jonathan lower himself into a chair. Nancy herself slumps down into the chair in between Steve and Jonathan. Her hand reaches out to hover over his face, worrying her lip between her teeth. Steve goes cross-eyed looking at her hand, and Nancy pulls it back.

Steve reaches up his own hand to swipe at his lip, bleeding lazily, and Nancy looks away. “I think you should see a doctor,” she says slowly, once the silence has stretched too thin.

“That’s what I said,” Dustin blurts. His eyes are wet and shining, and he’s looking imploringly at Steve. Hopefully he’s forgotten his grievances with Nancy. “Steve, head injuries are super dangerous, and you know football players can end up in *comas*, Steve, *comas*—”

“I’m fine,” Steve interrupts, frowning. “Just tired.”

“I don’t think you should be sleeping right now, Steve.” Steve sends Jonathan a look, a little annoyed but strangely neutral. Nancy realises she’s holding Jonathan’s hand and tries to detangle herself as subtly as possible.

“I didn’t say I was gonna sleep, I just said I’m tired. I know I shouldn’t be sleeping.” His voice has a bite to it that Nancy’s unfamiliar with; Steve, for all their problems and miscommunications, has never been anything but gentle with her, kind. Nancy pulls her fingers off the edge of the table and into her lap to keep them away from picking a side, guilt gnawing at her stomach.

Mike pokes his head around the door. “Oh, nice,” he says. “I see you’ve met snappy Steve.”

Steve narrows his eyes, the grimaces at the effort, and settles for flipping Nancy’s little brother off with one bloodied finger.

Mike raises an eyebrow. “Impressive, king Steve,” he drawls, and Steve groans. Mike’s lips quirk, and then he’s vanished again. Nancy finds it hard to pull her eyes away from the now empty doorway. Where’s Mike gone? He’s barely even talked to her. What about—oh no, what about Mom? Has Mike already called her, told her he was sleeping over? What will Nancy say? She can’t go home now, not today. Jonathan touches her shoulder.

“Nance,” he murmurs. Nancy blinks, tears her eyes away from the doorway, and tries to focus on his face. Steve is watching them, unreadable, and Jonathan’s fingers are burning a hole through Nancy’s shirt.

“Uh,” says Nancy. Dustin, from across the table, has raised a deadpan eyebrow. “I’m gonna—Mike.” She pushes off from the table. Jonathan and Steve watch her go.

“Mike?” He glances at her. His shoulders raise and then droop, and she can’t decide if it’s because he’s relieved, tense, or fearing a fight. Nancy bites her lip, reaching out and pulling a few pieces of grit from his hair.

“Are you okay?” Mike’s voice is even, controlled. Nancy wrinkles her nose, shrugs, and sits down on the seat’s armrest.

“Mm,” she replies noncommittally. “Tired.” Mike watches her, fully invested, and Nancy considers him. “We told some people about the lab,” she says, watching him closely. “Not the whole truth, but enough that they won’t be able to hurt anybody else again.”

“Good,” says Mike, genuinely. His lips tug to one side. “You and Jonathan, huh?”

Nancy looks away. She wants to be annoyed, to tell him to shut up,

to deny it, but her vision is going blurry and then Mike's arms are encircling her after only a moment of hesitation.

"Hey," he's saying, "hey, it's okay. I didn't mean anything by it, Nance."

"It's okay," sniffs Nancy, trying to pull away, but Mike keeps her close, arms deceitfully strong.

"It's not," he answers, "but you can deal with it in the morning. You'll figure it out. You always do." He pulls back, letting go of her arms, and Nancy almost misses his warmth.

"I'm sorry I haven't been a good sister," Nancy whispers, making sure to meet his eyes, but Mike looks away.

"It's okay," he says. The words feel empty, but Nancy knows he actually means them and that's worse.

"It's really, really not."

"Nancy." Mike sighs, runs a hand through his hair and tugs on his sleeves. "It's not like I've been a model brother, either."

"But I was supposed to be there for you. I was supposed—we were supposed to go through it together, weren't we?"

Mike's eyes soften, sad and gentle all at once. He always had too big a heart, even as a little kid. He used to let Nancy practice makeup on him. The silence doesn't feel oppressive anymore, and Mike meets her eyes again. "We'll do better this time," he tells her, and Nancy nods. It feels like a promise, more than *no more secrets* more than *no more lies*.

She ends up on the floor, leaning against the couch, Jonathan on one side of her and Steve on the other, with Dustin disappearing and reappearing every few minutes. Joyce still holds the frantic energy, the chaotic movements, but she's preoccupied with wiping Will's brow and watching the other kids as they busy themselves doing unknown things. One of them had a bat, Nancy thinks. The girl, maybe?

Lucas has been distant from them, sticking close to the other kids, and Mike's voice doesn't hold its usual brand of somewhat-fond exasperation when he talks, like he's scared of spooking any of them away. As if they'd leave now, Nancy thinks with an inner eye roll. Mike called their mother, as did Lucas and Dustin, and she isn't sure what the girl did, but—Nancy yawns, rubbing at her eyes, and blinks a few times. They haven't moved any of the pages. She wonders why.

Mike is sitting underneath a window, right now, hands fisted. Nancy's rifle sits next to him, and she realises she didn't ask why they're all so skittish, so filled with nerves. What are they waiting for, again? This time, when her eyes droop, she can't find the strength to open them again, and as she drifts away she feels her head slump on to one of the shoulders beside her.

(Distantly, as if from underwater, she hears when the truck pulls up. The kids all go silent, Joyce stills. She hears the sudden bursts of movement, of noise, hears the thumping of Hopper's boots and frantic words of children. The action subsides, and Nancy floats into unconsciousness again, cheek pillowied against a soft shoulder and nose filled with a familiar smell, though she isn't sure if it's Steve or Jonathan, and she doesn't really mind.)

When she wakes, it's because Steve is being pulled away from her. Her arms are wound around one of Jonathan's, she notices as she blinks blearily into awareness, and Steve, who'd been leaning his head on her shoulder, is being tugged gently away from her.

"What?" says Nancy, Steve's head lolling alarmingly, and Hopper's gruff face comes into her view. "No," she protests as Steve slides away from her and into his arms. "No, what?"

"I've gotta take him to hospital," Hopper says, voice still gruff at a whisper. The room is dark, and Nancy's heart kicks into a frantic frenzy.

"No," she protests, fingers grabbing weakly for Steve as Hopper shifts away. Jonathan stirs, and Nancy's eyes fill up involuntarily because what's happening, where is Steve going, why hasn't he woken up?

Distantly she can feel herself being to hyperventilate softly, because she's never made much noise in moments of panic, and *Steve-*

"Nancy, Nancy." Mike's grabbing onto her arms, holding them tightly in his long fingers, and Nancy's eyes flicker around the room until they land on her little brother's face. He hasn't slept, she can already tell. "Nancy, it's me, it's Mike. You're okay."

This will be really embarrassing in a couple hours, Nancy knows, but right now her mind is screaming *SteveSteveSteve* and she's just so tired of this, the confusion, the chaos. "Steve's gonna go to hospital," Mike says gently, his voice lowered. "He's pretty banged up."

Nancy stares, blinks, breathes. In. out. In again. Out again. "I'm coming with," she says.

"Okay," says Mike.

"Hell no," protests Hopper, and Nancy would usually be raising her fists and curling her lip and fighting but right now it's dark and Steve has bled all over her shoulder while she slept and she didn't even notice.

"She can come," Mike says firmly, and Hopper stares at him incredulously. "Steve will need a familiar face, and it'll make more sense for her girlfriend to arrive with him than for a police officer."

Hopper stares. Nancy stares back. *Girlfriend*, she thinks, and the guilt, the doubt and the confusion all nibble away at her heartstrings.

"Okay," says Hopper finally, like he can't believe he's saying it. "But—" he raises a finger aggressively, pointing it as threateningly as he can while still cradling Steve in his other arm. "Just this once, Wheeler, you hear me?"

"Yes, Sir." Nancy honestly can't tell if Mike is being sarcastic or respectful, and clearly neither can Hopper. Nancy scrambles forward, hugging Mike before she realises what she's doing.

"Thank you," she whispers. Mike's arms tighten around her.

"I'll come too," she hears Jonathan, quiet and soft and so gentle it

melts into Nancy's ears like honey. He's always been like that. She's always heard him like that. She isn't sure when he woke up, and she'd be concerned because *Jonathan and Steve*, except it's not surprising. Of course he'll come. Her hand fumbles for his in the darkness as she releases Mike, and he catches it. Their scars press together and Nancy squeezes. *This is real, this is now, Steve is going to hospital and we are going with.*

“Jesus,” Hopper snaps, but he’s still careful to be quiet. “Am I a bus now, or what? Jesus, shit. I’m not waiting all day for you.”

And that’s how Nancy spends sunrise; in the back of Hopper’s car with Steve sandwiched in between her and Jonathan, his eyes half-open as they hold his hands.

“Almost there, Steve,” says Jonathan, and Nancy smiles at him, unguarded and unprotected as morning light begins to seep through Hawkins.

“You’re going to be fine,” Nancy adds. Jonathan nods in encouragement, smile lop-sided, half-trembling at them both. Steve’s hand, in hers, squeezes. The sun empties the truck of its shadows, lighting up Jonathan’s hair and liquid in Steve’s eyes. “We’re all going to be just fine,” Nancy says, and her lungs, for once, feel clear. The air she’s breathing is new, fresh- full of beginnings. “We’re going to be fine,” Nancy repeats, and this time she’ll make it true.

Author's Note:

pls review frends :)